

Director's Monthly Report



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We are a Roman Catholic school system dedicated to excellence in education, the Christian formation of youth, and meaningful partnerships with family, community and the Church.



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You Just Never Know Where She Will Pop Up Next



She's (Phyllis Eikre, our Director of Education) pretty hard to pin down at the best of times, but there are just some days when she's extra busy. This particular day was a Friday, mid morning, light sprinkling of snow outside, nothing really out of the ordinary. I can hear her chit chatting on the phone from my cubicle across the hall (no ceilings – sound travels). I assume she's talking to Paul White from what I can hearPhyllis: “No problem Paul I can take the students. Yes I can, I've got a bit of time between meetings.....no..... no problem at all. Yes I can take them. When do you need me? In 5 minutes!!! (I can hear her voice go a little bit higher at hearing 5 minutes). At this point, I'm wondering.....what is she up to now. “No, I'll be right there. I just have to go home and get my car. You've got lots of cars going. Okay I'll be right there”. And off she goes shouting out across the hall that she's off to the Agape Table with some students from the Grade 10 Religion class from STA.



At this point I'm scrambling, grabbing the digital camera and trying to catch her before she leaves. I shove the camera at her....“Phyllis, take this, take some pictures.....this is great Phyllis, front page news in the Director's Monthly newsletter I say.....get some action shots. Get the students to take some pictures of you too.” And then she's gone.

I don't think Paul had expected the Director to problem solve by volunteering to take the students herself, but that is precisely what happened on this particular day.



A few days later she's off at the OCSOA Board of Directors and ECCODE AGM and I wrote her an e-mail..... I explain that I want to make this story the front page of the Director's Monthly report and she writes back: *Hi Trina: It would be better to write about the program and just mention that I helped out one day. Dean Woodbeck and many of the other teachers work so hard on this. I would not want to make it look like I did something special.* I write her back, yes, yes of course, I understand and have her complete a little Q and A to try to glean out a story (I'm very obedient you see). Here is a bit of the Q and A e-mail:

Trina: Why do you think this class/program is important for the character development of our students? **Phyllis:** Social Justice Activities. **Trina:** What was the experience like at the Agape Table? What thoughts were you left with? **Phyllis:** I was inspired by the students to be a better person and to take time to help those less fortunate than myself. Everyone appreciates a hot meal and a friendly face no matter who they are. **Trina:** Did our students say anything that morning that you found interesting/meaningful? **Phyllis:** They talked non-stop but mostly teenager things while they went about their work. **Trina:** Were the students surprised to learn that the Director would be taking them to the Agape Table? **Phyllis:** I don't even think most of them knew what my job was. To most of them I was Kayla's mom.



Phyllis brought students Jacob Degagne, Gage Coleman, Taylor Anderson, Roxy Derouard, Patrick Van Belleghem, and Keegan Albany with her to the Agape Table on Friday, November 18th.

Students from St. Thomas Aquinas High School have been serving lunch at the Agape Table Soup Kitchen at the Knox United Church in down town Kenora for the past 7 years. Dean Woodbeck brings different students every Friday. The students prepare food, serve those less fortunate and clean the kitchen. The students also host fundraising activities to provide support for the kitchen's expenses. It's all part of the school's character education and social justice initiatives. A special thank you to our school Chaplain Dean Woodbeck and all the many other dedicated and amazing teachers who work so hard every week to make this important social justice initiative happen.

Written by T. Henley, Executive Assistant to the Director



The Power of "We"

Over 40 students from St. Thomas Aquinas High School attended the We Day event on November 23rd at the MTS Center in Winnipeg, chaperoned by Dean Woodbeck, Kelly Sundmark and Cheryl Hicks. This was the first time We Day has ever come to Winnipeg.

The 16,000 students attending We Day were challenged to create a greater relationship between students on and off reserve. Young people can create "a shift in consciousness" that shows all Canadians the potential of Aboriginal young people, says founding member Mark Kielburger.

Speakers included former Prime Minister Paul Martin, former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, Canadian paralympian and icon Rick Hansen and actor Mia Farrow. Musical performances by Hedley, Sierra Noble, Shawn Desman and Down with Webster.

"There was such a positive energy throughout the whole day and I think We Day really motivated us to start making a difference however we can", says Student Trustee and We Day participant Beth Williams.

We Day was started by Free the Children, a Toronto-based organization founded by brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger. We Day engages youth to help others in their own communities and around the world to learn about global issues and participate in the drive to create positive change.

Mayor for a Day

In conjunction with Local Government Week (October 16 – 22) the City of Kenora hosted a contest for students of St. Thomas Aquinas High School in grades 9 – 12 to write a short essay on why they believe they should be Mayor for the Day.

Contest winner Emily Bernie got to spend the whole day with Mayor Dave Canfield and also participate in a radio interview, tour of the operations center, transfer station, water treatment plant and fire hall, brought greetings on behalf of the City of Kenora at the Rotary Luncheon and attend a City of Kenora Committee of the Whole Meeting.

Contest runners up Beth Williams, Ju Young Lee, and Karalea Cantera were invited to join the Committee of the Whole meeting as City Councillors.

"For me the whole day was wonderful and it was really interesting to see everything that goes into running the city and to experience the everyday duties that our mayor is responsible for, says Bernie. *The best part of the experience was going on the city tour and visiting the water treatment plant and the Kenora operations building. It was really cool to see the operations from behind the scenes".*

"For Emily to be able to see firsthand all the moving parts that are at play in running our city was a very valuable experience", says Paul White. *"We are really proud of her for winning the contest".*

A special thank you to Mayor Dave Canfield and all the city of Kenora officials who provided such a wonderful learning opportunity to our students.



St. John's Puts the "Mo" In Movember



The gentlemen of St. John's school are donning something a little extra this month.....a moustache in honor of "Movember". Thousands of men in Canada and around the world grow moustaches in November to raise donations and awareness about prostate cancer.

PJPII's Remembrance Day Display

In November Pope John Paul II students did an amazing job on their Remembrance Day display in the school's foyer. The students created a display of Walking in the Light of Christ with the Saints, where they researched and wrote about Saints.



Our Northern Light Shone Brightly at the Circle of Light Conference



Our board was very well represented at the Circle of Light Conference this past November 14 – 16th in Toronto. The third annual First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Conference was jointly hosted by the Ministry of Education and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. The theme was "*Learning Together for Student Success*".

Over 1,000 educators, administrators, students and trustees gathered for the three-day event. Topics covered every aspect of education and demonstrated the growing spirit of partnership between school boards and First Nation communities as they strive together to offer Ontario's students educational opportunities that inspire and are respectful of the whole child.

Attendees from our board included Mary Cunningham, Alexa McKinnon, Shelly Tom, Allana Cook, Steve Mastromatteo, Siobhan Hope, Donald Kelly, Mary Candline, and St. Thomas Aquinas High School student Storm Baker and his mother Gwen Redsky.

Kerri Favreau, Marnie Buffet and Tamara Bond from St. Louis School provided a workshop at the conference on Literacy Learning in Classrooms that are Culturally Relevant to Aboriginal Learners. Their presentation showcased student voices and experiences as evidence-informed instructional practices in language development and literacy that specifically respond to the needs of Aboriginal Learners.

Storm Baker was the only student in Northwestern Ontario chosen to attend the Circle of Light Conference as a student panel representative. The student panel provides an opportunity for conference participants across the region to hear the students' perspective and recommendations. "*We are very proud of Storm*", says Shelly Tom. "*Storm was the voice of our community and our region and he represented our board very well.*"

STA Students Take a Stand Against Bullying

November 13 – 19th was bullying awareness week and students at St. Thomas Aquinas High School were a vision of pink on Wednesday. Students hung anti-bullying posters and had various slogans read over the PA system. This is the 9th year of bullying prevention education and the theme was "Stand Up (to bullying)."

The focus was on cyber bullying and the main message on Wednesday was....."Everyone has the right to be respected and the responsibility to respect others, in person AND online!"

"Although this week is focused on bullying awareness and prevention, as a Catholic School Board we promote this throughout the entire school year by always referring to "what would Jesus do?", says Jeff Richards, teacher. Because of this we have a very friendly educational environment for staff and students to work in.

